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SUBJECT: THE EFFECT OF NEPAL'S MAOIST VICTORY ON INDIA'S LEFT

REF: A) KOLKATA 104, B) KOLKATA 127, C) 07 KOLKATA 109, D) KOLKATA 66, E) 07 KOLKATA 297

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Eastern Indian security officials are concerned about the implications of the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist (CPNM)'s victory in the April 10 Constituent Assembly (CA) elections for regional stability. Indian leaders have sought to put the best face on the CPNM's success, but security analysts are concerned about the implications for India. Senior Nepali Maoists such as CPNM Politburo Member Chandra Prakash Gajurel and others have been arrested or detained in India, Nepali Maoists are believed to have in the past conducted attacks in Bihar, and Indian and Nepali Maoists have issued statements of mutual support. In addition, local Indian officials are also concerned that the Nepali Maoists could take advantage of the recent agitations of ethnic Nepalis in northern West Bengal for a Gorkhaland state. The Gorkhaland agitations build on concerns about earlier Nepali Maoist efforts to support the formation of the Communist Party of Bhutan -Marxist-Leninist-Maoist (CPB-MLM). Indian officials hope that the CPNM's victory in the CA elections will bring them within the democratic fold and away from their earlier rhetoric of South Asia-wide revolution. However, even if the Nepali Maoists change their behavior and rhetoric, India's Maoists are unlikely to lay down their weapons soon. Rather, the CPNM's success serves as encouragement to Indian Maoists to continue their violence until they have the leverage to gain greater political advantage. It also should be a lesson to senior GOI policy makers that Indian Naxalite/Maoists movements could end up bidding for power at the top unless the legitimate grievances they channel are addressed with urgency and unless the violence and the terrorism these movements embody is suppressed early on by a combination of hard and soft power. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Indian leaders are seeking to portray the CPNM's CA election victory in a positive light. On April 15, Minister for External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee called CPNM Leader Pushpa Dahal (aka Prachanda), congratulating him and expressing a desire to work with the Maoists. Indian leaders hope that the CPNM, will end its revolutionary violence and rhetoric, and serve as a model for the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist). Speaking in West Bengal on April 14, Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPM) Politburo member Sitaram Yechury exhorted India's Maoists to follow the Nepali Maoists' example, saying publicly in an April 14 speech in West Bengal that, "The most militant practitioners of the Maoist ideology in South Asia have opted for peaceful elections realizing the futility of

armed struggle. Indian Maoists should learn from them and consider coming back to the peaceful democratic process." (Comment: Yechury has spent the past few years carving out a role for himself in mediating India's engagement with the CPNM. In 2006 he served as an interlocutor between the then Seven-Party Alliance and the Nepali Maoists (though it was clear that he shared ideological sympathies and supported the Maoists) and held talks with Prachanda and PM Koirala on Nepal's peace process. End Comment.) Yechury and the CPM leadership have been keen to encourage the CPI-Maoist to follow the CPNM as the CPI-Maoists have been waging an ideological battle against the CPM and have consistently targeted and killed CPM politicians in West Bengal (reftel a).

¶3. (SBU) However, local officials do not believe that the Indian Maoists will give up their weapons any time soon. Sikkim University Vice Chancellor Mahendra Lama, who was an election observer in Nepal, and who maintains an extensive network of connections in the narrow "chicken's neck" between Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Bangladesh, told Post that the Nepal election results will have little impact on Indian Maoists as, "their objectives and visions are quite different." Rather, the CPNM's success will likely inspire the CPI-Maoists to continue their violence. Attacks in India have continued since the CPNM's victory. On April 13 in Bihar, over 100 Indian Maoists attacked the busy Jhajha railway station, killing six people including four railway security personnel (reftel b).

¶4. (SBU) In addition to the inspiration that India's Maoists may take from the CPNM, local officials fear that the rise of the CPNM may have security implications for India. In August 2002, the CPNM and the CPI-Maoists were instrumental in establishing the Conference of Co-ordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organizations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA). The CCOMPOSA Declaration states, "The unity of Maoist forces must primarily be based on upholding M(arxism)-L(eninism)-M(aoism), not only in theory, but more in particularly in its application

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to practice, of which advancing the People's War is the principal task. Besides, as one of its main tasks, CCOMPOSA has to focus its attack on Indian expansionism, which is the main bulwark of reaction." The Declaration adds that "The Indian Expansionist State, backed by . . . U.S. imperialism, constitute the common enemy of the people of South Asia. This provides a concrete political basis for building unity of the South Asian revolutionary forces." (Note: The full text of the Declaration is available at http://cpnm.org/new/ccomposa/ccomposa_index.htm. End note.) A series of ten points for achieving unity of Maoist Parties in South Asia includes the following problematic language:

Build a broad front with the on-going armed struggles of the various nationality movements in the subcontinent.

¶8. Lend mutual assistance and exchange experiences . . . amongst Maoist forces.

¶9. Coordinate and consolidate the unity of Maoist Parties and Organizations in South Asia.

¶5. (SBU) The CCOMPOSA Declaration could be dismissed as simply aspirational language. However, other factors appear to demonstrate that the Maoist presence in Nepal has had an impact in India. For instance, Bihar police officials have noted to ConGen the significant number of Nepali Maoists detained in local prisons and the regular movement of insurgents back forth across the porous Nepal-India border. Reflecting this, high level Nepali Maoists arrested in India have included CPNM Politburo Member Chandra Prakash Gajurel, Standing Committee Member Mohan Baidya, and Central Committee Member and General Secretary of the All Nepal Peasant Organization Chitra Bahadur

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Shrestha. (Note: Embassy Kathmandu notes that no senior Nepali Maoist leaders have been arrested after April 2006. End note.) In June 2004, Prachanda issued a press release condemning

Shrestha's arrest noting, "The Indian police has arrested some cadres and leaders including the Central Committee members of our Party Comrade Kul Prasad KC, Comrade Lokendra Bista, Comrade Kumar Dahal, Comrade Hitbahadur Tamang Comrade Anil Sharma, Central Advisory Committee member Comrade Chitra Bahadur Shrestha while coming to Patna the capital of Bihar state of India in relation to the Party work and physical treatment. Our Party, having denouncing the arrest against those revolutionaries who have been fighting against the feudal autocrats for the real democracy, forcefully urges the immediate release of them." Strikingly, Prachanda's release admits that the officials were conducting "party work" and "fighting feudal autocrats" while in Bihar. The GOI later released Gajurel, Baidya and Shrestha in 2006 after much prodding from Yechury as a confidence building measure with the CPNM.

¶6. (SBU) An apparent example of Nepali-connected violence in India was the attack in March 2007 when about 200 suspected Nepali Maoists attacked a small village block in the Sitamarhi district of North Bihar, killing one security guard and injuring a dozen civilians. The Maoists assaulted the local police station for weapons and a bank branch for money (reftel c) and escaped across the border to Nepal.

¶7. (SBU) The CPNM's rise presents concerns as it comes at time of changing political dynamics in the Eastern Himalayas. In March, Bhutan had its first democratic parliamentary elections. In January and February, prior to the elections, Bhutan experienced a series of bomb explosions. Following the February 4 explosions, a Royal Bhutan Police spokesman said that "Investigating officials recovered leaflets of the Communist Party of Bhutan based in Nepal from the scene threatening to stop the national Assembly elections." The CPNM supported the creation of the CPB-MLM and the CPB-MLM's first press release was published through the CPNM website. Local security officials have expressed to ConGen the concern that the CPNM, flush from its success in Nepal, could seek to replicate its approach in Bhutan, using the disgruntled Nepali community in Bhutan as a wedge. During a March 22-26 visit to Bhutan by Political Minister Counselor, Bhutanese officials unanimously attributed the violence in the run-up to Bhutan's first parliamentary elections to Nepal-based groups supported by Nepal's extremist communist parties. (Embassy Kathmandu Comment: Despite this history, it is uncertain how the CPNM will behave towards Bhutan and ethnic Nepali Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. End Comment.)

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¶8. (SBU) PolOff discussed these connections with IPS officer Gaurav Dutt (protect) who is the Inspector General for Intelligence in north Bengal. Dutt was emphatic that Nepali Maoists were heavily active in the area, particularly in training and arming almost any underground group that might share its anti-government sympathies.

¶9. (SBU) India has also been experiencing agitations since December 2007 among the Nepali population in northern West Bengal, which has reasserted demands for a new Gorkhaland state (reftel d). The Gorkhaland movement is being led by Bimal Gurung and his Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJMM) party. According to Dutt, Gurung recently sent 20 members of his GJMM to Nepal for weapons training with the Youth League of the Communist Party of Nepal. In March Gurung met with the leadership of the Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party and Kamtapur Progressive Party, representing tribal and adivasi separatists in the Cooch Behar area, to expand the proposed Gorkhaland state into the narrow Siliguri corridor. The Siliguri corridor, or "chicken's neck," is only 13 miles wide between Nepal and Bangladesh at its narrowest point and is the only land access to India's sensitive Northeast hinterland. Gurung and GJMM have already at times shut down transportation through the Siliguri corridor during the height of agitations in March. India faces the disturbing prospect of access to its Northeast, including areas in Arunachal Pradesh which are in dispute with China, subject to the whims of the firebrand Gurung and the Nepali community.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: Indian officials as well as CPM leaders hope that the CPNM's victory in the CA elections will bring them within the democratic fold and away from their earlier rhetoric of South Asia-wide revolution. However, even if the Nepali Maoists change their behavior and rhetoric, India's Maoists are unlikely to lay down their weapons soon. Rather, the CPNM's success serves as encouragement to Indian Maoists to continue their violence until they have the leverage to gain greater political advantage. In addition, Nepali communities in West Bengal and Bhutan are looked at with suspicion as they may serve as a fifth column for the CPNM, should it retain its revolutionary ways and seek to expand its Himalayan red bastion.

¶11. (SBU) Comment continued: While the Prime Minister and other senior GOI have occasionally raised India's Naxalite/Maoists movements as a serious internal security threat, the Indian state has yet to develop a comprehensive policy to address the issue. For the most part, poorly trained and ill-equipped local police forces are the ones that deal with the Naxalites/Maoists and their response is wholly inadequate for the threat at hand. The CPNM's runaway success in the Nepal election should be a lesson to senior GOI policy makers that Indian Naxalite/Maoists movements could end up bidding for power at the top unless the legitimate grievances they channel are addressed with urgency and unless the violence and the terrorism these movements embody is suppressed early on by a combination of hard and soft power.

¶12. (U) This cable was coordinated with AmEmbassies New Delhi and Kathmandu.
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